



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

30 North Market Street, Third Floor Frederick, Maryland 21701 (301) 600-1147



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### CASE NO. CR 23-03 (DOE # 23-02) NOMINATION TO COUNTY REGISTER STAFF REPORT

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#### SUMMARY

**Property:** Peter of P Grossnickel Farm  
11720 Wolfsville Road, Myersville

**Applicant:** Patricia Hurwitz

Public Hearing for consideration of placing the property located at 11720 Wolfsville Road, Myersville, Peter of P Grossnickel Farm, on the Frederick County Register of Historic Places. Submitted by Patricia Hurwitz, property owner of record.

The public hearing for designation to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places will be held at 7:00 p.m., or thereafter, on March 1, 2023.



*Figure 1: Subject Property*

## **DESIGNATION STATUS**

The property is individually designated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C and is listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties under F-4-113. Staff determined the property eligible for listing to the County Register (DOE # 23-02) and notified the Historic Preservation Commission of this determination at their February 1, 2023 meeting. The nominated property contains the historic house, bank barn, granary, woodshed, hog pen/chicken house, beehive oven, smokehouse, spring house, milk house, and summer kitchen. The nominated property encompasses approximately 25.53 acres of land.

## **SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

The applicant submitted a completed County Register nomination form, written historical and architectural narratives for the house, a summary of property ownership, and digital photographs.

## **SITE VISITS**

Staff worked with the owner of the property and scheduled site visits on February 25 and 26, 2023. Commissioners were notified of the pending nomination and encouraged to visit the site on these dates.

## **REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1) Analysis**

The documentation submitted by the applicant regarding the history and significance of the property clearly establishes the architectural and historical significance of the Peter of P Grossnickel Farm, indicating that the property is eligible for listing under Criteria 6B(1A), 6B(1D), 6B(2A), and 6B(2E). The period of significance for the property is 1804 to 1947, the time when the tract of land was first purchased by Bernhard Grossnickel through the addition of the milkhouse to the property.

### **2) History Summary**

The Peter of P Grossnickel farm was first purchased by his father Bernhard Peter Grossnickel. Bernhard, who went by his middle name Peter, and his brother John were born in Philadelphia to Peter and Margaret Grossnickel. Their uncle, John Grossnickel, migrated sometime after 1746 from Philadelphia to the Middletown Valley in Frederick County. Having no children of his own, Peter and John inherited their uncle's properties. In Uncle John's 1775 Will, he gives Peter part of a tract of land known as "Stoney Arabia" where Peter "now occupies." Peter purchased additional tracts of land in 1794 and 1796. He renamed "Stoney Arabia" as "The Two Sons" and renamed the tracts of land purchased in 1796 to "The Six Daughters."

Bernhard Peter Grossnickel married Christina Studebaker in 1774 and together they had nine children, eight of whom survived, six daughters and two sons. Bernhard Peter died in 1822 and his Will, written in 1818, gives the tract of land called “The Six Daughters” to his son, Peter of P. The Will does not mention an existing dwelling on this tract of land. Where Peter and his family were residing in 1818 is hard to determine from the historical record. He was married by that time and had four children before 1820. The Peter Grossnickles listed in the 1820 US Census for Frederick County do not match up to the number of children he had indicating he may have been residing with family. By 1830 however, he is listed in the US Census as head of household indicating the dwelling was constructed by this time.

Peter of P remained on his farm until his death in 1863. The farm passed to his son Elias who continued to farm through his 70s. He sold the farm to his son Charles in 1898 who also farmed the land. In 1938, the property was sold to Paul and Jennie Grossnickle until it was sold from the Grossnickle family in 1994. The current property owner has retained the property since 1995.

### **3) Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Significance Criteria**

The property is eligible for listing under this category for meeting criteria 6B(1A) and 6B(1D), as outlined in Chapter 1-23-6B(1) of the Frederick County Code:

- 6B(1A): *The property has significant character, interest, or value as part of development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation.*
- 6B(1D): *The property exemplifies cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of county and its communities.*

The property has significant character, interest, and value in the development and heritage of the County and exemplifies cultural, economic, social, and historic heritage of the county and its communities. First, the property illustrates the farming heritage of the County and includes numerous domestic and agricultural outbuildings to help convey this history. The property includes a bank barn, granary, corn crib/wagon shed, and chicken coop that were important to the production of grain in the 1800s. Additionally, a milkhouse was added to the property in the late 1800s or early 1900s demonstrating the transition of grain farming to dairy production.

Additionally, the Grossnickels of Frederick County were descendants of German immigrants. The parents of Bernhard and his brother John immigrated to Philadelphia from Germany in about 1746. While their parents remained in the Philadelphia area, their uncle John, perhaps attracted to the offer of cheap land, migrated to Frederick County sometime in the later half of the 1700s. His nephews soon followed.

The Grossnickels, later changed to the English spelling of Grossnickle, were German Brethren. This religious group grew in southern Germany and was persecuted by the German government. Attracted by William Penn’s invitation to settle in 1719, the first wave of German Brethren

immigrated to the United States. Their numbers grew in Pennsylvania and also Maryland and Virginia, but continued to face persecution. The Brethren did not believe in the practice of slavery and refused to bear arms, join the army, take part in the Revolution, or fight against the Native Americans.

One of the initial congregations of German Brethren in Frederick County was known as the Middletown Valley congregation. They would meet in people's homes and barns. According to the National Register nomination, the first permanent place for the Frederick County German Brethren was that of Bernhard's dwelling. Sources also place their religious meetings at the Peter of P Grossnickel farm, John Grossnickel of P farm, and the Michael Harshman barn. The first building erected for the sole purpose of the church was built in 1839, the Ann Maria Moser Church, no longer extant. Near the Grossnickel's properties a second meeting house was built in 1847, the Grossnickle Church of the Brethren. This building was replaced in 1899.

The property represents the wave of German Brethren into the Middletown Valley during the late 18<sup>th</sup> through mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Peter of P was a leading member of the German Brethren in the area, contributing his property and later his financial resources to the continuation of the religious meetings. The Grossnickle Church of the Brethren is located just to the south of the Peter of P farm and sat among several Grossnickle farms in the area. The Peter of P Grossnickel farm is a symbol to that earlier German settlement.

#### **4) Architectural and Design Significance Criteria**

The property is also eligible under this category for meeting criterion 6B(2A) and 6B(2E) as outlined in Chapter 1-23-6B(2) of Frederick County Code:

- 6B(2A): *The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or architecture.*
- 6B(2E): *Represents an established and familiar visual feature of neighborhood, community, or county, due to singular physical characteristics, landscape, or historical events.*

The Peter of P Grossnickel farm is a good example of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century German farm complex. The 2 ½ story stone house, with its four-bay wide façade and center passage, is an example of an evolution in progress. It leaves the asymmetrical, three-room German plan house of the 18<sup>th</sup> century behind in favor of the symmetrical, center passage houses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The house is constructed of stone, a building material preferred by German builders, and is three bays wide on the first story and four bays wide on the upper story.

Additionally, the layout of the farm with the domestic outbuildings, such as the spring house, beehive oven, and smokehouse clustered near the dwelling and the agricultural buildings clustered away near the bank barn, represents the American farm geography.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Peter of P Grossnickel farm for designation to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places pursuant to Criteria 6B(1A), 6B(1D), 6B(2A), and 6B(2E) as described in Section 1-23-6B of the County Code.

If the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) recommends the property for local designation, the HPC will submit a letter of recommendation to the County Council for final action.